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C O N F I D E N T I A L ASMARA 000349

SIPDIS

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/10/2018
TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [APER](#) [KIRF](#) [SOCI](#) [ASEC](#) [ER](#)
SUBJECT: IMPRISONED FSN RELEASED

REF: ASMARA 39

Classified By: Ambassador Ronald K. McMullen for reason 1.4 (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Ambassador met with former local guard Aklilu Yohannes (strictly protect) on July 9, who was imprisoned underground for nearly a year without charge. Aklilu was additionally imprisoned for 12 days in 2005 for belonging to an unregistered church. While in prison, Aklilu reports being deprived of food, water, and medical attention. End Summary.

¶2. (C) According to Aklilu, Eritrean soldiers came to his house on July 7, 2007 and took him directly to the underground prison known as Track B (reftel), an annex of the old Kagnew Station located on the outskirts of Asmara. Aklilu was held for 6 months without initial charge, after which time he was taken to a judge who accused him of acting against the government and of not completing national service. (Note: Aklilu had completed his national service between 1999 and 2000 and was released due to medical complications; however, the Ethiopians bombed the Sawa hospital in 2000 which apparently housed his release records. End Note.) Aklilu estimates there are more than 600 prisoners in Track B and describes the prison as a transit facility for prisoners taken in for a variety of "offenses." Accordingly, there are no physicians within Track B; prisoners must rely on each other for all medical needs. Aklilu also described a lack of food, water, and sleep while imprisoned.

¶3. (C) Eritrean police previously arrested Aklilu in 2005 for belonging to the Medhane Alem faith, a reform movement of the Orthodox Church. Aklilu was held in a shipping container for 12 days along with pastors of the church. Aklilu stated that these leaders are all still imprisoned within the shipping container. Aklilu began employment with the Embassy in 2002, working until he was arrested by Eritrean soldiers in 2007. He has no family, no job, and no prospects. He said he "hates Eritrea," and we suspect he will attempt to flee the country illegally.

¶4. (C) Another Embassy security guard, Mulugheta Yohannes (strictly protect), was arrested July 5 while visiting his imprisoned brother in a jail just north of Asmara. Mulugheta had forgotten his demobilization card and was arrested when he failed to produce it on demand. Luckily, he was able to get word to his wife, who took the card to the prison. Mulugheta has been released and is now back at work.

¶5. (SBU) Since 2001 more than 24 FSNs from Embassy Asmara have been arrested. Three remain in prison, uncharged, and

incommunicado. Others have been released with no explanation- some have fled the country, while others have returned to work.

MCMULLEN